

Dear Chairs Elliott and Slap, Vice Chairs Turco and Flexer, Ranking Members Haines and Witkos, and Members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee:

My name is Julia and I am a resident of New Haven. I'm writing to communicate my strong support for H.B. 5033, an Act addressing the needs of food-insecure students at public institutions of higher education. This bill would require public institutions of higher education to assess and address food insecurity among students and to increase access to the supplemental nutrition assistance program for eligible students at institutions of higher education.

Black and low-income students are disproportionately impacted by food insecurity. A study done by the University of Connecticut estimated that around 35% of Connecticut college students suffer from food insecurities. Amongst these alarming statistics, black students constitute fifty-eight percent, which is 19% higher than the overall rate for students identifying as White or Caucasian. Students experiencing food insecurity have a lower average GPA, and higher rates of depression and nutrition deficiencies.

At least 6 other states have implemented, 10 states have introduced, proposed or are debating similar bills. CT should follow in their lead to support students. By supporting students in schools we can also support students' futures. Connecticut is one of the WORST states in the country when it comes to parole opportunities (only 15% of prison population is eligible even for consideration). This puts our state as more restrictive and regressive than 20+ states including Kentucky, Tennessee, and Texas.

There are many ways this bill can address food insecurity among college students including:

- Start a Swipe Out Hunger program: For campuses that have meal plans, students should have the option to donate their extra meals to their peers facing food insecurity on campus, enabling these students access to a warm, nourishing meal at a dining hall.
- Establish Food Pantries: Through an on-campus pantry or partnership with a local food bank, students should be able to regularly access food.
- Create SNAP Enrollment Opportunities: Campuses should designate a person to ensure students have access to accurate information about the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), including how to apply.

In conclusion, I urge you to address the needs of food-insecure students at public institutions of higher education. The consequences of food insecurity impact their ability to perform well in and out of school and have a life-long impact on their development and livelihood. I urge you to favorably vote this bill out of the Higher Education Committee so that these individuals have a chance at fulfilling their best potential.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Julia Sulkowski
New Haven, CT